



MEDIA RELEASE

BLM Alaska Fire Service

P.O. Box 35005, Fort Wainwright, AK 99703
Email: BLM_AK_AFS_Public_Affairs@blm.gov
Fire Information Phone: 907-356-5511
<http://fire.ak.blm.gov>



Release No. AFS07092012

July 9, 2012

Contact: Mel Slater, m Slater@blm.gov or (907) 356-5511 or

ALASKA FIRE SERVICE CONVERTS TO A NEW LIGHTNING DETECTION NETWORK ON JULY 10

Fort Wainwright, Alaska — The Bureau of Land Management Alaska Fire Service will convert its current Alaska Lightning Detection Network (ALDN) to the technologically efficient time-of-arrival (TOA) based Lightning Location System (LLS) on July 10.

The conversion represents a new evolution of lightning detection and will increase the range and accuracy of current capabilities. The TOA network is more sensitive and capable of detecting lightning at farther distances using advanced algorithms that record all individual strokes versus the older system that recorded many strokes as one stroke. Due to the increased range, the system also will provide greater visibility of strikes to the North Slope area that may have been previously unreported. TOA also records cloud to cloud strikes that aid in early warning planning. The TOA network is an Internet based communications network that is easier to maintain and will provide a 50 percent cost savings.

The TOA system has been installed over the last 18 months and a comparison of consistency and patterns with the current system was conducted. The AFS comparison studies indicate the TOA ALDN is reporting over two times the number of lightning strikes displayed by the current system. The National Weather Service was a participant in the comparison study.

The first operational lightning detection system used by AFS were installed in the early 80s. The ALDN has continued to evolve over the last 35 years with significant improvements in hardware, software and numbers of sensors reporting.

The new ALDN will consist of 10 TOA sensors at Barrow, Kaktovik, Kotzebue, Fort Yukon, Galena, Bethel, McGrath, Glennallen, Tok and Sitka. Three additional TOA owned sensors located at North Pole, Wasilla, False Pass and Ross River in Canada will be used to collect data. Bettles, Nome, Port Alsworth and Yakutat are identified as future sensor sites. AFS also is negotiating to obtain data from three privately owned TOA sites in Canada.

For more information about the Alaska Lightning Detection Network (ALDN), contact Bev Fronterhouse, 907-552-5591 or email: bfronter@blm.gov.

###